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ACTION SS-30

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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5586
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FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOWDLER FROM CHAPLIN

E.O. 12065: XDS-1 6/3/10 (CHAPLIN, MAXWELL) OR-M
TAGS: PINT, MILI, BL, AR
SUBJECT: REPORTED ARGENTINE INVOLVEMENT WITH BOLIVIAN COUP PLOTTERS

REF: STATE 143728; USDAO BUENOS AIRES 18 6804 009680

1. S - ENTIRE TEXT

2. GENERAL GALTIERI PLEADED A HEAVY SCHEDULE PREVENTED HIM FROM RECEIVING ME ON MONDAY AND ARRANGED FOR MEETING FOR ME AND ARMA WITH CHIEF OF STAFF MG VAQUERO AND SECRETARY GENERAL OF ARMY, MAJOR GENERAL BIGNONE AT 1900 MONDAY JUNE 2. RECEPTION WAS CORDIAL WITH NO TRACE OF THE IRRITATION VAQUERO HAD SHOWED WHEN REPORTS OF ARGENTINE INVOLVEMENT IN BOLIVIAN PLOTTING RAISED WITH HIM PREVIOUSLY. I REVIEWED AMBASSADOR CASTRO'S DISCUSSIONS ON THIS TOPIC WITH FOREIGN MINISTER AND WITH GENERAL GALTIERI, AND EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR THE FORTH-RIGHT EXPRESSION OF GOA POSITION PROVIDED BY GENERAL VAQUERO WHEN TOPIC RECENTLY RAISED WITH HIM. I SAID WE HOPED THAT ELECTORAL PROCESS COULD CONTINUE AND

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THAT GOA SHARED OUR CONCERN THAT A GOLPE IN BOLIVIA WOULD ONLY BRING FURTHER DIVISIONS AND INSTABILITY. HIS ASSERTION OF MAY 21 THAT GOA WAS NOT ENCOURAGING PLOTTERS WAS WELCOMED IN USG. IN VIEW OF HIS STATEMENTS, WE FELT

Department of State, A/GS/NPS/SRP

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IT IS IMPORTANT TO RAISE WITH HIM THE FACT THAT THERE WERE CONTINUING INSISTENT REPORTS OF STATEMENTS BY SENIOR BOLIVIAN ARMY OFFICERS THAT BOLIVIAN ARMY HAD RECEIVED ASSURANCES OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT FROM ARGENTINE ARMY IN THE EVENT OF A SUCCESSFUL GOLPE. I TOLD HIM THE USG HAD INSTRUCTED ME TO RAISE THESE REPORTS WITH HIM AND TO EXPRESS THE HOPE THAT THE GOA WOULD FIND IT APPROPRIATE FOR A SENIOR ARGENTINE ARMY OFFICIAL TO REITERATE THE ARGENTINE POSITION ON A GOLPE TO LEADERS OF THE BOLIVIAN ARMY.

3. GENERAL VAQUERO SAID THAT THERE HAD BEEN A MEETING OF ARGENTINE AND BOLIVIAN OFFICERS RECENTLY TO DISCUSS SECURITY PROBLEMS, ONE OF A SERIES HELD ANNUALLY IN BOLIVIA OR ARGENTINA. HE SUPPOSED IT WAS ALMOST INEVITABLE THAT FOLLOWING SUCH A MEETING OF SENIOR OFFICERS THERE WOULD BE CLAIMS THAT ARGENTINA WOULD SUPPORT ONE OR ANOTHER FACTION. HE COULD STATE UNEQUIVOCALLY THAT IN NO WAY WAS ARGENTINA ENCOURAGING A GOLPE. A GOLPE SOLVED NOTHING. ARGENTINA WAS NOT WORKING FOR THAT, AND THE ASSERTION THAT THE ARGENTINE ARMY WAS PROMISING FINANCIAL SUPPORT WAS RIDICULOUS. RESPONDING TO MY SUGGESTION THAT THEY APPROACH BOLIVIAN ARMY LEADERS, HE SAID AGAIN THAT ARGENTINA DOESN'T PERMIT OTHER COUNTRIES TO MEDdle IN ITS AFFAIRS, AND IT DOES NOT MEDdle IN THEIRS. HE SAID THEY WOULD NOT ENCOURAGE A GOLPE AND BY THE SAME TOKEN THEY WOULD NOT TRY TO PREVENT A GOLPE. BOLIVIA'S PROBLEMS WERE INTERNAL; ARGENTINA COULD NOT CREATE ORDER WHERE THERE

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IS NONE, AND COULD NOT PREVENT SOME GROUP IN BOLIVIA FROM MOVING AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT IF IT WAS DETERMINED TO DO SO. ARGENTINA HAD TO LIVE WITH WHATEVER GOVERNMENT MIGHT COME TO POWER. HE REITERATED THAT ARGENTINA WAS IN NO WAY ENCOURAGING A GOLPE.

4. VAQUERO SAW THE BOLIVIAN SITUATION DEGENERATING INTO MORE AND MORE SQUABBLING FACTIONS WHO WOULD NOT WORK TOGETHER. HE SAW THE NEED FOR AN INSTITUTIONAL SOLUTION, A GROUP OF PARTIES, THE MILITARY, THE CHURCH AND OTHERS WHO WOULD JOIN FORCES TO PROVIDE STABLE LEADERSHIP. HE DESCRIBED JUAN LECHIN AS A DECLARED COMMUNIST AND EX-PRESIDENT HERNAN SILES AS A DISGUISED COMMUNIST, WHILE CONCEDING THAT VICTOR PAZ WAS AN ACCEPTABLE LEADER. HE APPROVED

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OF AN ALLIANCE BETWEEN BANZER AND VICTOR PAZ, BUT SAID SOME OF BANZER'S SUPPORTERS HAD VETOED IT. THE MEETING CLOSED WITH VAQUERO STATING THAT HE WAS ALWAYS PREPARED TO SPEAK FOR THE POSITION OF THE ARGENTINE ARMY AND EAGER TO MAINTAIN CONSULTATIONS.

5. COMMENT. VAQUERO'S DENIAL OF ENCOURAGING GOLPISTAS WAS ENERGETIC AND UNQUALIFIED. AT THE SAME TIME HE DISPLAYED A SET OF ATTITUDES WHICH LEAD HIM AND OTHER ARGENTINE MILITARY TO BE SYMPATHETIC TO THEIR BOLIVIAN COLLEAGUES. THIS COMBINATION IS COMPATIBLE WITH A BOLIVIAN BELIEF THAT THE GOA WOULD SUPPORT A POSSIBLE GOLPE. THE GOA IS NOW FULLY AWARE THAT IT IS BELIEVED IN BOLIVIA TO BE SUPPORTING THE GOLPISTAS, YET IS STICKING TO ITS STORY THAT IT IS KEEPING ITS HANDS OFF THE SITUATION. VAQUERO MAY WELL BE SINCERE IN HIS STATEMENTS, TO INDUCE THE GOA TO TAKE A PUBLIC ATTITUDE ON A POSSIBLE GOLPE WILL REQUIRE CONCERTED PRESSURE FROM THE ANDEAN GROUP, WHICH THE GOA DOES NOT WISH TO ALIENATE AT THIS POINT.

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